

Endangered Nongame Species Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
June 26, 2014
Division of Fish and Wildlife
501 East State Street
Station Plaza 5, 3rd Floor
Trenton, NJ

Members in attendance: Barbara Brummer (Chair), Joanna Burger, Emile Devito (arrived after approval of minutes), Howard Geduldig, Rick Lathrop, Howard Reinert, David Chanda, James Shissias, Jane Morton-Galetto

Absent: James Applegate, Erica Miller, David Mizrahi

Staff in attendance: Dave Chanda (Director), Dave Jenkins (Bureau Chief), Kim Korth (ENSP), Mick Valent (ENSP), Gretchen Fowles (ENSP), Pat Woerner (ENSP)

- The regular meeting of the ENSAC was held on the above date.
- The meeting was called to order at 10:15 AM by Chairwoman Brummer.
- Chair Brummer stated that adequate public notice had been provided regarding today's meeting.

ENSAC representation at July 8, 2014 Fish and Game Council Meeting. Chair Brummer noted that she would not be able to attend the upcoming Fish and Game Council Meeting. The possibility of Jane Morton-Galetto attending the July 10th Fish and Game Council meeting in place of Barbara Brummer was discussed. The fact that Ms. Morton-Galetto would not be able to vote was raised. Jane indicated that she would be willing to attend if she was available.

Approval of Minutes from March 19, 2014 meeting.

Motion for approval of minutes was made by Howard Geduldig, seconded by Jim Shissias. Motion carried by unanimous vote with Jane Morton-Galetto and Howard Reinert abstaining.

Director's Report

Director Chanda provided an update on Division of Fish and Wildlife, including the current fiscal and staffing challenges (position vacancies, impending retirements and other staffing issues). B. Brummer, E. Devito, J. Morton-Galetto, R. Lathrop and J. Burger provided question and feedback.

D. Chanda also noted his recent completion of the National Conservation Leadership Institute program.

Chief's Report

D. Jenkins added information regarding fiscal challenges facing ENSP, including reductions in federal State Wildlife Grants (SWG) funding. Chief Jenkins spoke about his recent presentation on ENSP income sources and their status at the New Jersey Wildlife and Conservation Conference held June 7-8 in Atlantic City. He also briefed the committee on the Blue Ribbon Panel on fish and wildlife funding being convened by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

Legislative Report

A table of legislation of possible interest (composed by P. Nelson) to the committee was provided.

Discussion regarding Assembly two of the bills followed:

-A3128 / S2012 prohibiting the sale of items containing ivory or rhinoceros horn.

-A3133 requiring DEP to establish "private wildlife habitat certification program and which creates affirmative defense against municipal nuisance ordinances for properties certified under the program.

Old Business:

Update on DEP action re. Niles and Lathrop "No Net Loss" report

D. Jenkins updated the Committee on the current status of the Department's action and progress on addressing the recommendation in the Larry Niles and Richard Lathrop report "Creating a More Effective Protection of Endangered and Threatened Species Habitat Through Conservation Banking." (a.k.a. "No Net Loss" report). The Committee reiterated its concern that it be kept involved in discussions and consulted as "advisors to the Commissioner" with regard to matters affecting endangered and threatened wildlife.

E DeVito raised concerns regarding the recent Appellate Division decision concerning DEP permits issued for a Walmart in Toms River and Manchester Twp. Although the published decision overturned some of DEP's issued permits the judges agreed with the DEPs position on Endangered and Threatened wildlife (primarily northern pine snakes) which several environmental groups challenged. E. DeVito noted that the decision may have implications for addressing endangered and threatened wildlife within DEP land use regulations.

ACTION: E. Devito to email information on the case and Appellate decision to H. Geduldig.

State Wildlife Action Plan Review and Revision:

K. Korth provided an update on the review and revision of the New Jersey Wildlife Action Plan, including the results of a steering committee meeting held on May 28th, 2014 meeting at Assunpink. She reviewed the criteria used to select and rank "Species of Greatest Conservation Need" SGCNs which will form the basis of focusing the revised plan. She noted that DFW staff, with input from, taxa experts outside of the DFW will engage in t a process of selecting focal species (approx. 30 species) for the plan based on conservation need, regional responsibility, and feasibility of effective action.

ENSAC members expressed some concerns regarding how this process may impact funding allocation and management decisions.

J. Burger and J. Morton-Galetto urged that the plan should consider the importance of wildlife and habitat conservation in urban and suburban areas and of the opportunity and need to build awareness, especially by youth, in these areas.

Action- K. Korth indicated that she would provide the Committee with the list of Regional (Northeast) Species of Greatest Concern.

Bobcat Research and Staff Recommendations

G. Fowles and M. Valent gave a Power Point presentation regarding ENSP's current research efforts focused on bobcats and discussed proposed recommendations intended to reduce both the incidental capture of bobcats by trappers and reduce mortality of incidentally trapped bobcats.

"Bear," ENSP's working dog, will continue to be useful for scat surveys in the near future but is getting old. Since Bear is our best tool for conducting surveys, we need to consider alternatives for gathering data in the future.

2005-2013 N=450 scats were collected

2002-2014 N=96 tissue samples were collected

ENSP is has recommended changes to the Game Code that it believes will reduce mortality of incidentally trapped bobcats by licensed trappers that are legally pursuing game species. The Division's Game Code is currently on a two year schedule for proposed revisions and the next revision is scheduled to occur in 2015.

Current research on bobcats includes: 1) Genetic structure of NJ bobcat population – samples collected from PA, NJ, NY and Maine for comparison; 2) Population estimate for NJ based on capture/recapture data collected over the past several years (in cooperation with Rutgers University); 3) habitat use and movements using GPS collars on 3 individuals live-trapped near major roadways; 4) Predictive habitat model; 5) Bobcat response team to assist in the safe release of bobcats that are accidentally trapped by licensed trappers that are legally pursuing game species' and; 6) Population demographics from trapping and road mortality.

G. Fowles discussed the CHANJ (habitat connectivity) project and how the efforts of the project are to help in the safety and protection of the bobcats and other endangered species by ways of creating safe walkways to cross roads and waterways via structures.

M. Valent discussed the new ad that was placed in the Fall Hunting and Fishing Digest to encourage people to report bobcat sightings. The ad contains a smart phone barcode that links to a list of recommendations for reducing the chance of incidental capture and trap mortality of bobcats.

A new bobcat data sheet has been developed for biologists who respond to incidentally trapped bobcats and road mortalities.

Necropsies will be conducted on all bobcats that are recovered as a result of trapper mortality. This will include collecting a tissue sample for DNA analysis, a tooth for ageing and reproductive tracts from female animals.

Questions have been added to the Division's Trapper Survey to gather more data on bobcats that are incidentally captured by trappers during the trapping season.

The list of Game Code changes that are being recommended by ENSP was presented to ENSAC. These include:

- mandatory reporting of incidentally trapped bobcats by licensed trappers during the trapping season
- a no entanglement regulation where no woody stems (> ½" in diameter) or any other solid objects are permitted to occur within the radius of the cable restraint so a captured animal cannot become entangled
- require the use of relaxing type locks on all cable restraints
- increase the deer stop from a minimum of 6" (2" dia. loop) to a minimum of 8" (2-1/2" dia. loop)
- prohibit "hanging sets" where animals can lose contact with the ground.

Staff is also working towards inclusion of the recommended practices in the Division's Trapper Training classes.

Upon completion of the presentation a motion was made by Joanna Burger to support all of the recommendations. The motion was seconded by Jim Shissias. Motion passed with no dissenting votes.

Action: B. Brummer noted that, in the future, items that will require a vote need to be addressed earlier in the meeting agendas.

Meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.